

In the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle, comprising a group of at least two rollers kept in contact with a running fiber bundle, and a base body reciprocating to be repetitively and periodically repeatedly brought into contact with and kept away from the running fiber bundle as the axial center of said base body moves ~~relatively~~ relative to the running fiber bundle, the arrangement being such that the remaining fiber bundle between the rollers does not receive pressure in the non-contact state, said base body being provided between at least a pair of rollers adjacent to each other, of said group of rollers.

2. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle according to claim 1, wherein ~~two more said base bodies are provided~~ the number of said base body is at least two.

3. (Original) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the base body is a rotatable roller.

4. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 1 through 3, wherein at least one roller of said group of rollers or at least one of said base bodies comprises a roller having a plurality of projected support portions extending along a direction of the rotating axis of the roller and projected from the surface of the roller, at the periphery of the roller.

5. (Original) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle according to claim 4, wherein at least one of said rollers having projected support portions is positioned upstream of said base body, and is rotated in the same direction as the running direction of the running fiber bundle, with its peripheral surface speed kept lower than the running speed of the running fiber bundle.

6. (Original) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle according to claim 4, wherein at least one of said rollers having projected support portions is positioned upstream of said base body, and is rotated in the direction reverse to the running direction of the running fiber bundle.

7. (Original) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle according to any one of claims 4 through 6, wherein in said roller having projected support portions, the angle (θ) formed between the respectively adjacent support portions at the roller axis is 5 to 50 degrees and the relation between the height of each support portion (t) and the radius of the roller (r) satisfies formula $t > r[1/\cos(\theta/2) - 1]$.

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 1 through 7, wherein at least one roller positioned downstream of said base body, of said group of rollers is a brake roller.

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 1 through 7, wherein at least one roller positioned downstream of said base body, of said group of rollers is a dancer roller.

10. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a spread fiber bundle, ~~comprising use of~~ with an apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle as set forth in ~~any one of claims claim 1 through 9, and the step of comprising~~ running a fiber bundle zigzag along said rollers of said group of rollers at a fiber bundle running speed of 3 to 20 m/min, with said base body reciprocated at a vibration frequency of 1 to 100 Hz with an amplitude of 1 to 25 mm, for spreading the fiber bundle.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a spread fiber bundle according to claim 10, further ~~comprises a step of~~ comprising heating ~~the~~ a surface of at least one roller of

said group of rollers or ~~the~~ a surface of at least one base body of said base bodies, or the fiber bundle per se.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a spread fiber bundle according to claim 10 or 11, further ~~comprises a step of~~ comprising hitting the fiber bundles ~~by means of~~ with a reciprocating body or a rotating body while heating the fiber bundle at a position upstream of said base body in the running direction of the fiber bundle, ~~using the apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle as set forth in any one of claims 1 through 9.~~

13. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a spread fiber bundle according to claim 10 or 11, further ~~comprises a step of~~ comprising vibrating the fiber bundle ~~by means of~~ with a reciprocating body or a rotating body at a vibration frequency lower than that of the reciprocating vibration frequency of said base body, at a position upstream of said base body in the running direction of the fiber bundle, ~~using the apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle as set forth in any one of claims 1 through 9.~~

14. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a spread fiber bundle according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 10 ~~through 13~~, wherein the tensile modulus of elasticity of the fiber bundle is 200 to 700 GPa.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a spread fiber bundle, according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 10 ~~through 14~~, further ~~comprises a step of~~ comprising blowing a gas onto the running fiber bundle at a position at least either upstream or downstream of said base body in the running direction of the fiber bundle, ~~using the apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle as set forth in any one of claims 1 through 9.~~

16. (Original) A method for producing a spread fiber bundle according to claim 15, wherein the temperature of the gas is 70 to 250°C and the gas blowing pressure is 0.1 to 0.5 MPa.

17. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a spread fiber bundle according to ~~any one of claims claim 10 through 16~~, further ~~comprises a step of~~ comprising supporting the running fiber bundle on a belt having a width wider than that of the fiber bundle width and curved to be projected on the side to be kept in contact with the fiber bundle, at a position downstream of said base body in the running direction of the fiber bundle, ~~using the apparatus for producing a spread fiber bundle as set forth in any one of claims 1 through 9.~~

18. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a prepreg ~~which comprises the step of~~ comprising impregnating a resin into the spread fiber bundles produced according to the method of producing a spread fiber bundle as set forth in ~~any one of claims claim 10 through 17.~~